



Office of the Attorney General  
State of Texas

DAN MORALES  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

August 21, 1996

Mr. David M. Douglas  
Assistant Chief  
Legal Services  
Texas Department of Public Safety  
P.O. Box 4087  
Austin, Texas 78773-0001

OR96-1511

Dear Mr. Douglas:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 34334.

The Department of Public Safety (the "department") received several requests for records pertaining to the Texas Ranger's investigation of different criminal cases. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.103, 552.107, 552.108, and 552.119 of the Government Code.

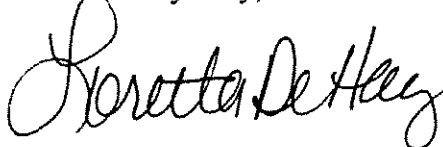
You claim that section 552.101 excepts from disclosure criminal history report information ("CHRI"). Section 552.101 excepts from disclosure "information deemed confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." This section encompasses information protected by other statutes. Federal regulations prohibit the release of CHRI maintained in state and local CHRI systems to the general public. *See* 28 C.F.R. § 20.21(c)(1) ("Use of criminal history record information disseminated to noncriminal justice agencies shall be limited to the purpose for which it was given."), (2) ("No agency or individual shall confirm the existence or nonexistence of criminal history record information to any person or agency that would not be eligible to receive the information itself."). Section 411.083 provides that any CHRI maintained by the department is confidential. Gov't Code § 411.083(a). Therefore, the department must withhold the CHRI from the requestor.

Section 552.108 excepts from disclosure "[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime," and "[a]n internal record or notation of a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that is maintained for internal use in matters relating to law enforcement

or prosecution.” Gov’t Code § 552.108; see *Holmes v. Morales*, 39 Tex. Sup. Ct. J. 781, 1996 WL 325601 (June 14, 1996). We note, however, that information normally found on the front page of an offense report is generally considered public.<sup>1</sup> *Houston Chronicle Publishing Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.--Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), writ ref’d n.r.e. per curiam, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976); Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976). We conclude that, except for front page offense report information, section 552.108 of the Government Code excepts the requested records from required public disclosure.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, you may choose to release all or part of the information that is not otherwise confidential by law. Gov’t Code § 552.007.

We are resolving this matter with an informal letter ruling rather than with a published open records decision. This ruling is limited to the particular records at issue under the facts presented to us in this request and should not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records. If you have questions about this ruling, please contact our office.

Yours very truly,



Loretta R. DeHay  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

LRD/rho

Ref.: ID# 34334

Enclosures: Submitted documents

cc: Mr. Gregory W. Wiercioch  
Staff Attorney  
Texas Resource Center  
3223 Smith Street, Suite 215  
Houston, Texas 77006  
(w/o enclosures)

---

<sup>1</sup>The content of the information determines whether it must be released in compliance with *Houston Chronicle*, not its literal location on the first page of an offense report. Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) contains a summary of the types of information deemed public by *Houston Chronicle*.

<sup>2</sup>As we resolve this matter under section 552.108, we need not address your other claimed exceptions to required public disclosure.

Mr. Jim Marcus  
Staff Attorney  
Texas Resource Center  
3223 Smith Street, Suite 215  
Houston, Texas 77006  
(w/o enclosures)